

The 5S in the Office

5S System, lean office, and Kaizen are popular terms used to describe a system used to find and remove all forms of waste in the work environment. These are the Kaizen principles that are used on shop floors around the world to increase productivity and efficiency. These can also be applied to the office environment.

A 5S Office System will make your office clean, organised and office workers more efficient. Your office workers will be able to find what they need, when they need it and know exactly where everything is. A 5S Office System will lay the foundation for a lean office that you can build upon. Using the 5S System will make your office more productive, cleaner, raise office workers morale and save your company money. Once the lean office foundation is in place you can build on it using the principles of Kaizen to continuously improve your office environment and office management systems.

5S is the method used for organising a workplace. It is sometimes wrongly referred to as a housekeeping methodology as it goes far beyond housekeeping. 5S is imperative to creating the Lean Office ideal and can be easily implemented into the office environment. The process is very straightforward with a set routine to follow - Sort, Set, Shine, Standardise and Sustain.

Sort – This is the very basic principle in the sorting part of the 5S technique. If any item is not absolutely essential for the business process then remove it. Organise an area and label (red tag) non-essential items putting them into the area. This allows an area of review from which items can be retrieved if, during the natural course of business, they are suddenly required. However, set a timescale for use and if they are not used during this timescale remove them from the business.

Set – Set everything in order and set the limits for every process within your office. This phase focuses on effective storage solutions so that even if someone is not used to your systems, things are easy to find, easy to use and easy to return to the correct location.

Shine – The third phase is dedicated to cleanliness. It is about creating a work environment that people want to work in. Focus on the cause of any mess. Can you implement more electronic means to dispense with in trays? Paint walls that are unsightly and most importantly ensure everything from lights to computers are cleaned.

Standardise – Slipping back into old habits is one of the biggest challenges of lean and it is all too easy to do. It happens very slowly and can go unnoticed for significant periods of time. This phase helps to deal with this. Communication is critical to ensure that everyone knows objectives and their individual responsibilities. Staff must be instructed as to their responsibilities and it is vital that management punish accordingly any violations.

Sustain – The fifth and final 'S' is about creating habits. It is well documented that it takes at least 3 weeks to form a habit and the ultimate goal must be for staff to feel it is uncomfortable and wrong when they don't put things back in the drawer or not empty their waste paper bin. Once this is achieved sustaining tends to be viral, new members of staff have the precedents of 5S hammered into them by existing staff members, and the cycle becomes continuous.

Course duration: Workshop (Classroom element): - 4 Hours.

Practical: - 1 Hour.

Maximum number of delegated per session: - Eight (8)